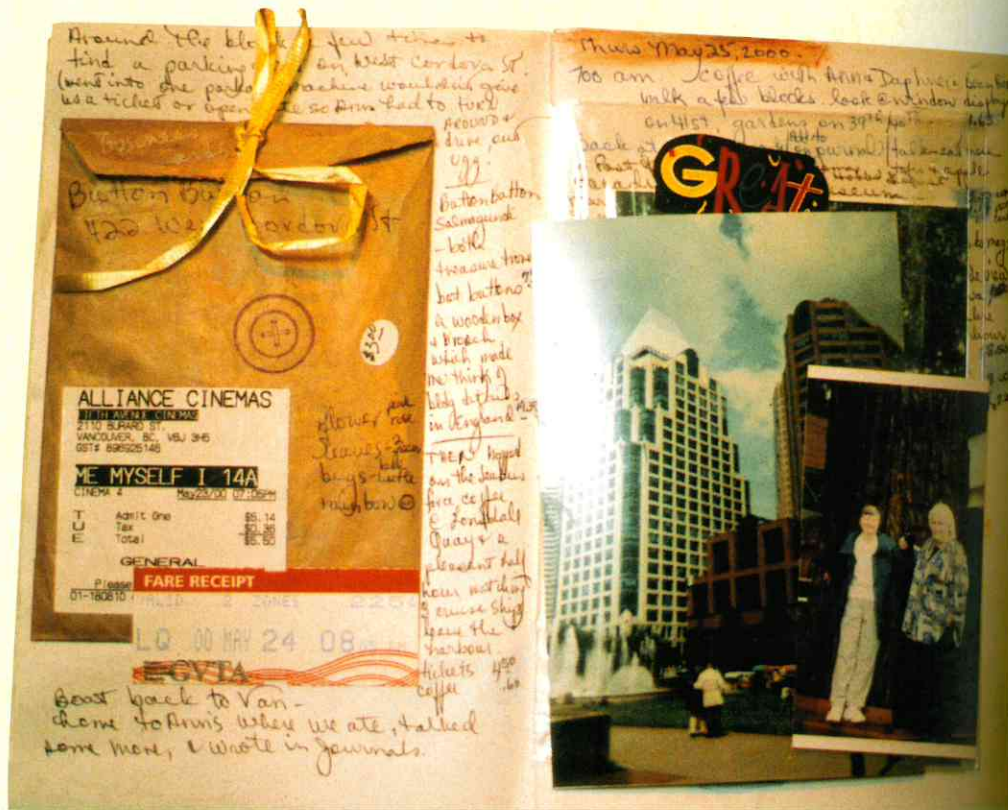


Customizing a Blank Book

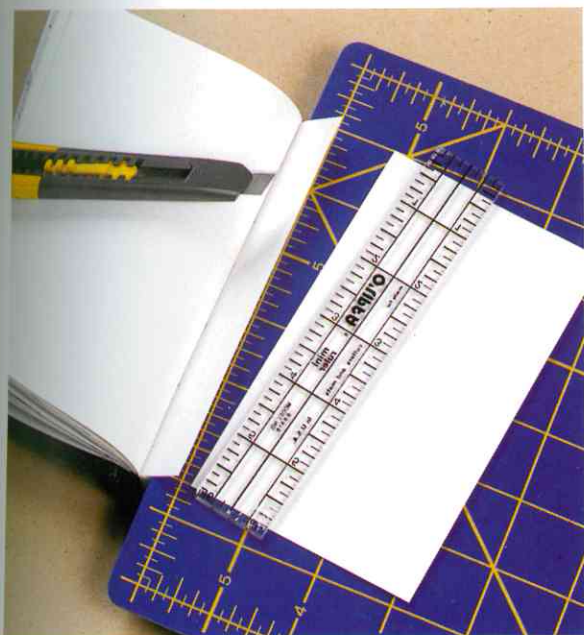
Customizing a book is a relatively nonthreatening way to begin to interact with it. Let's assume you've already chosen a blank book to use for a journal or scrapbook. It might be one that you went out and bought specifically for a project, or it might be one that has been living on your bookshelf for a while. In either case, it may need a little customizing to make it the perfect vehicle for the kinds of pages you intend to create, the kinds of ideas and feelings you want to express, or the job you want your journal to do. Following are some easy-to-make changes. Please note that it's perfectly fine to make no changes at all. It's equally fine to make every one of the suggested changes. The guiding principle is the idea and/or feeling that you want to express in your book. Only you can decide whether and how to modify your book.



Pamela Lyle Westhaver, *Salt Spring 2000*, 2000. Assorted papers, memorabilia, surface decorations, watercolor pencil, and crayon. PHOTO BY ARTIST

REMOVING PAGES

If you want to add elements such as collage to the pages in your book, you'll need to modify the book because extra materials tend to make it bulk up and splay open. There's a secret to keeping a book from bulging open when you add in elements: equalize the thickness of the spine with the thickness of the fore edge of the book. There's nothing you can do to increase the thickness of the spine of a sewn or glued book, but you can reduce the thickness of the fore edge so that added elements simply plump it back to its original size. To do this, you will need to remove some pages. A rule of thumb is to remove one or two pages (depending on the thickness of the paper) before every page on which you intend to glue a collage element, photograph, or any other added item. This is assuming that the added items are flat and of the approximate thickness of the removed page or pages.



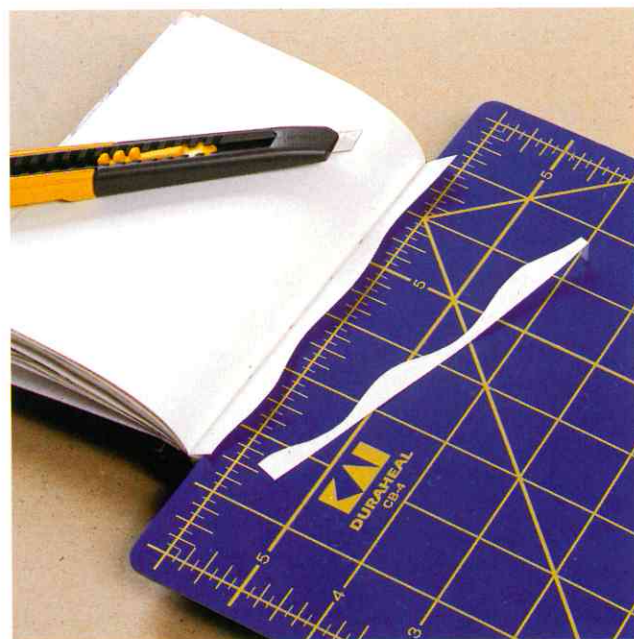
You Will Need

- Cutting mat
- Ruler
- Craft knife

Instructions

Place a small, thin cutting mat under the page to be removed, pushing it back toward the spine as far as it will easily go. Use a ruler and craft knife to cut the page away approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (1.3 cm) in from the spine edge.

For a particular expressive reason, you might prefer to cut a wavy line or some irregular line instead of using a ruler. The resulting page stub can also become a design element if you color it, draw on it, write on it, paint on it, etc.



ADDING SPINE FATTENERS TO ALBUMS

Most blank albums come with spine fatteners or stubs (pieces of paper the height of the text pages, but only as wide as the spine part of the pages). If yours doesn't have them and you plan to glue elements to the pages, open the binding by either untying it or unscrewing the metal posts, and insert spine fatteners.



You Will Need

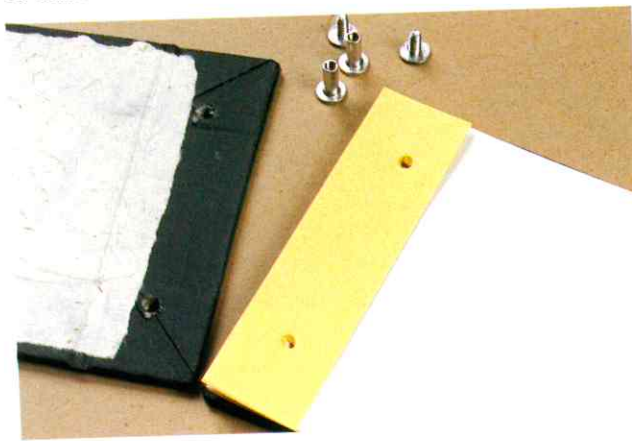
- Heavy paper
- Scissors
- Hole Punch

Instructions

1 Cut spine fatteners from heavy paper. They need to be the width of the spine portion of the cover and the height of the pages of the album.

2 Punch or drill holes in the spine fatteners in exactly the same place as holes in the pages, relative to the spine edge.

3 Interleaf each page with a spine fattener, and then re-bind the album.



ADDING AND CHANGING ELEMENTS

You might decide that you would like to add elements to your book: an envelope for collecting some sheets of watercolor paper, colored paper, or beautiful wrapping paper from that small shop in the village you visited last weekend. The following is a good method for adding to your blank book:

You Will Need

- Cutting mat
- Craft knife
- PVA or other adhesive

Instructions

1 Begin by removing one page (or two, depending on the thickness of the paper you will add), as directed in the instructions on page 35.



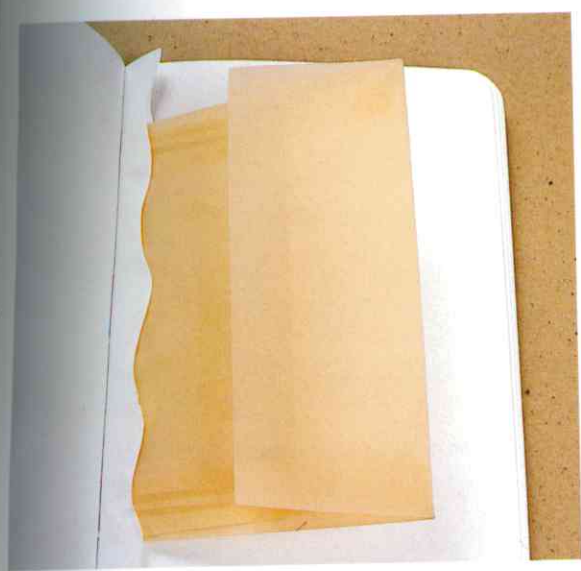
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Run a bead of PVA or roll-on adhesive along the spine edge of the element you want to add, and press it to the front of the page stub.



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If you've cut off two pages, put glue on the front of the second stub, and lay the additional element on it. Run another bead of PVA along the back of the first page stub and press it on top of the spine edge of the add-on element.



Variation

Another way to attach elements to a page is by using eyelets and an eyelet plier, available in fabric stores (see photo, below). Follow the directions given with the eyelet pliers to join elements together.



Above: Nina Bagley uses small metal eyelets to attach pages to page stubs and to add elements to pages.

LAMINATING A PAGE

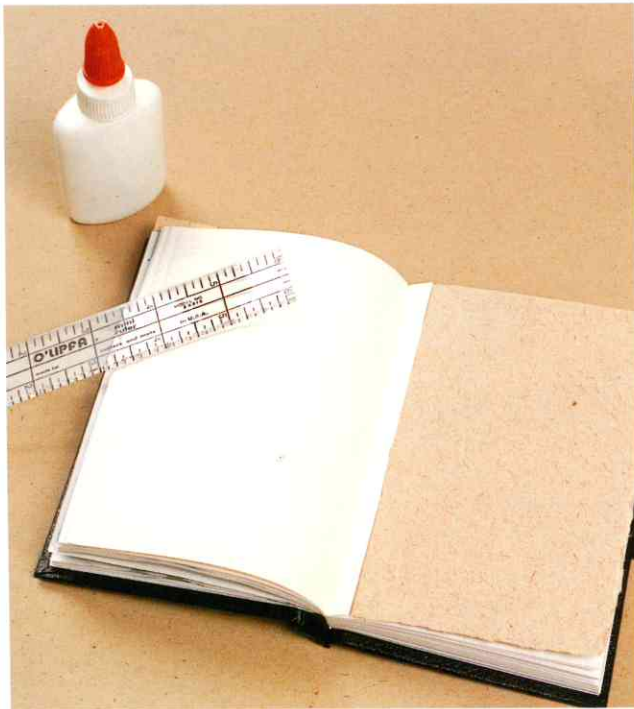
You can laminate (completely glue) one page on top of another page in a book. If the paper that you want to laminate is on the heavy or moderately heavy side, begin by removing the page or pages before the one to which you'll laminate (see directions for removing a page, on page 35).

You Will Need

- Paper
- Scissors or craft knife
- PVA or roll-on adhesive

Instructions

1 Cut the paper that you want to laminate so that it's the same size as the page to which it will be laminated, minus a vertical strip along the spine edge equal to the preceding page stub.



2 Spread PVA or roll-on adhesive over the back of the element to be laminated. Line up the element with the fore edge and the base page, and press the pages together (see photo, below left).

3 Slip a piece of wax paper into the book on top of the laminated page, and close the book to press the pages while they dry.



Gwen Diehn, *Untitled Journal Page*, 2001. PHOTO BY ELYSE BROWN

If your book is
you will want to
tabbed divider

You Will Need
- Matte knife or
- Cutting mat
- PVA
- Heavy Paper

Instructions
Laminate your page
mm) or so beyond
book (see photo,



Right: Gwen Diehn
2001. The
laminated

TAB DIVIDERS

If your book is going to have different sections that you will want to locate quickly, consider laminating a tabbed divider page at the beginning of each section.

You Will Need

- Matte knife or craft knife
- Cutting mat
- PVA
- Heavy Paper

Instructions

Laminate your page so that the tab extends 1/4 inch (6 mm) or so beyond the text block, or pages, of the book (see photo, below).



Right: Gwen Diehn, *Untitled Journal Page*, 2001. The page to the left has a tab sheet laminated to it. PHOTO BY ELYSE WEINGARTEN

Variation

You can also use found objects or collage as tabs. Just make sure that they are securely fastened to your page and will stand up to wear and tear (see photo, below).



Above: Nina Bagley uses found objects attached with eyelets as tab dividers.



EDGE TRIMMING

Another way to change the appearance of a book is to modify the edges of the pages.

You Will Need

- Sharp-edged metal ruler
- Cutting mat
- Decorative edge scissors

Instructions

1 Slip a cutting mat under two or three pages at a time, then use a sharp-edged metal ruler to hold the pages down while you tear a narrow (about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch {6 mm}) strip from the edges of each page. Depending on the thickness of the paper, you may be able to tear two or even three pages at once.

2 For a crisper look, use decorative edge scissors to cut the edges of the pages. If your book has a soft cover, you can even cut the edges of the covers this way (see photos, right and below).



Above: Coral Jensen used decorative edge scissors to give a richly textured look to the text block of this journal.



The Decorated Page

Journals, Scrapbooks & Albums Made Simply Beautiful



Gwen Diehn